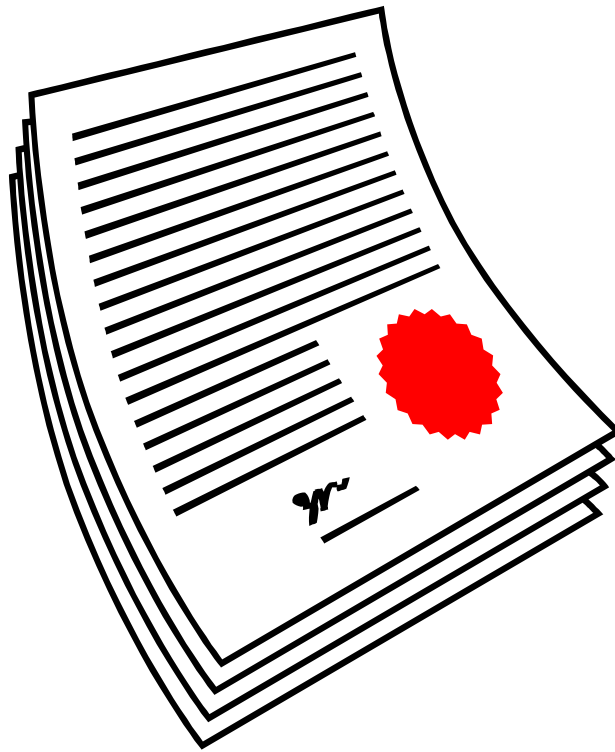


California Child and Family Services Review


County System Improvement Plan *User's Guide*



County System Improvement Plan

User's Guide

This guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the Instructions and Outline for the County Self Improvement Plan, a component of the California Child and Family Services Review. The guide's purpose is to assist county staff in completing the County System Improvement Plan (SIP) in two ways:

1. Identify the purpose or intent of the various areas of the System Improvement Plan outline or provide clarification to the instructions. This information is in boxes marked with an : 
2. Define key terms. Please see the glossary in Attachment I.

To facilitate completion of the SIP, this guide follows the same order as the System Improvement Plan outline. If information is provided in a prior section, the text may refer to that prior section rather than repeat the information. The template provided in the original SIP template along with alternative templates will be available on the CDSS website located at: <http://www.childsworld.ca.gov/>

It is recommended that the completed SIP be no longer than 25 pages.

Purpose of the County System Improvement Plan

The County System Improvement Plan (County SIP) is the third component of the C-CSFR. Updated on an annual basis, the County SIP is the operational agreement between the County and the State outlining how the County will improve its system of care for children and youth and forms an important part of the system for reporting on progress toward meeting agreed upon improvement goals using the C-CSFR outcomes and indicators. As a general matter, the SIP focuses on outcomes. For those outcome indicators for which the County performance is determined to be below the statewide standard, the County SIP must include milestones, timeframes, and proposed improvement goals the County must achieve.



Statewide standards are not yet being used: The legislation establishing C-CSFR indicates that “established compliance thresholds” for each outcome indicator will determine a county’s performance. As this first year of the C-CSFR is establishing a baseline these thresholds are unavailable. They will be calculated and made available to counties in the future.

Counties demonstrating consistently poor overall performance and/or reduced compliance with the outcome measures specified in the C-CFSR will receive focused technical assistance and training.



There are a variety of types of technical assistance and training that are available to counties. The SIP Template includes a space to request training and TA. Your Regional Training Academy (RTA) should be aware of the needs identified in your Self-Assessment and, in fact, you may have already spoken with them about your training needs. The California Social Work Education Center is another source of assistance. Their website: <http://calswec.berkeley.edu/> also includes links to California's five RTAs.

Technical assistance on a limited basis is also available by request to CDSS from one of the 10 national child welfare resource centers. These include:

National Abandoned Infants Assistance Resource Center

<http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~aiarc/>

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice

<http://www.cwresource.org/>

National Child Welfare Resource Center on Legal and Judicial Issues

<http://www.abanet.org/child/rcji/aboutus.html>

National Resource Center for Community-Based Family Resource and Support Programs (FRIENDS)

<http://www.friendsnrc.org>

National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/socwork/nrcfcpp>

National Resource Center for Information Technology in Child Welfare

<http://www.nrcitcw.org/>

National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

<http://www.muskie.usm.maine.edu/helpkids/>

National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption

<http://www.spaulding.org/>

National Resource Center for Youth Development

<http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/nrcyd.htm>

National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment

<http://gocwi.org/nrcdm>

Finally, don't overlook the opportunities available in learning from other counties. This approach is exemplified in the Peer Quality Case Review of the C-CFSR process.

If a County demonstrates a lack of good faith effort to actively participate in this process or any portion thereof, and/or consistently fails to follow State regulations and/or make the improvements outlined in the County SIP, CDSS, in accordance with current law, has authority under Welfare and Institutions Code Section 10605 to compel County compliance through a series of measured formal actions up to State Administration of the County Program.

To develop and revise the SIP, County child welfare agencies must collaborate with their local partners. These partners generally include the groups identified as the likely partners for the County self-assessment process. The SIP should cross reference other service plans and reporting requirements (Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention and Treatment, Promoting Safe and Stable Families, and other applicable plans) in order to reinforce the need to collaborate and develop more integrated local service structures.



The opportunities available within the SIP to cross-reference related service plans and reporting requirements include:

- SIP Template: “Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals”
- SIP Template: The *strategies* you identify in the SIP may reference other service-related plans and reporting requirements as applicable.

Elements of the County SIP

I. SIP Narrative

The narrative section of the SIP should not exceed 6 to 8 pages. Please respond to the two sections below in the body of the narrative. Please note: You are requested to include the Summary Assessment (Section V) of your County Self-Assessment document as an attachment to the SIP. This attachment does not count towards your 25 page maximum.

1. Identify Local Planning Bodies

Purpose: The purpose of this section is to demonstrate to CDSS the collaborative and planning relationships the county child welfare agency engaged for the Self-Assessment and SIP processes.

Instructions: Please list and briefly describe those local planning bodies that have had input into the Self-Assessment and the SIP or will have a role in fulfilling the System Improvement Plan. These local planning bodies are usually composed of local stakeholders and agencies that serve the families and children who are in the CWS system or who are at risk of entry to the system, along with consumers of CWS services and advocates. Examples include planning bodies that support collaboration among children’s

services providers, early childhood and prevention services, system of care networks, etc. You should include a list of name and affiliation of members the SIP Team that worked on your System Improvement Plan.¹

2. Share Findings that Support Qualitative Change

Purpose: CDSS would like to learn about the data collection that you performed in the Self-Assessment that assisted with your analysis of qualitative practices such as customer service, family assessment, service delivery, case planning, etc. This is the section to share findings from client and service provider focus groups, surveys, interviews, and other data collection mechanisms. This section will also include the findings and analysis of the PQCR once that process is launched.

Instructions: Briefly describe any data collection techniques such as those mentioned above. Information provided would include type of data collection technique, target audience, number of responses, results and a *brief* description of how this information has been integrated into the SIP. For the PQCR please highlight those areas identified for review, findings, and how this information has been integrated into the SIP.

3 Attach the Summary Assessment (Section V) of the Self-Assessment.

II. SIP Plan Components

Using the SIP Component Template attached to this Guide (and also available on the CDSS website) complete one component per outcome indicator or systemic factor being addressed for the SIP. CDSS recommends that each county address no more than 3 to 4 outcome indicators or systemic factors. **All safety outcomes identified as an area needing improvement in the county Self Assessment are required to be addressed in the SIP.** This section of the SIP should be of sufficient length that each outcome indicator or systemic factor has been sufficiently addressed. Recommended length is 15 to 18 pages.

1. Identify the outcome indicator or systemic factor being addressed in this component of the Plan.
2. Briefly summarize your county's current performance on this outcome indicator or systemic factor using information gathered in the Self-Assessment process.
3. Identify improvement goals that are specific, achievable, and measurable.

¹ See Section D, below, for guidance on membership of the SIP team.

4. List the strategies to be used to achieve the goals
5. Explain the rationale for the strategy: How the strategies will build on progress and improve this program/outcome area.
6. Identify the specific milestones of the strategies and the timeframes in which the milestones will be achieved.
7. Discuss any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.



This is applicable if this plan component is addressing an outcome indicator. In this section of the template, you should address those related systemic factors that were discussed and explored in the analysis of this outcome indicator during the Self-Assessment process. If this component is addressing a systemic factor, this section is not applicable.

8. Describe education/training needs and any identified needs for technical assistance, and how these activities will help achieve these goals.
9. Identify roles of other partners in achieving improvement goals (for example, attach Memoranda of Understanding between the Probation and CWS agencies).
10. List any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support accomplishment of the improvement goals.



Use this section of the SIP Template to bring to the attention of CDSS any regulatory or statutory changes that would help your county in meeting its improvement goals. An example would be changing the existing timeframe for family maintenance services to allow for longer periods of service provision to maintain children in the home.

III. Process

Counties submit their SIP to the CDSS after completion of the County Self-Assessment. The County will provide CDSS with an annual update to the County SIP. County child welfare directors select the membership of the group, relying primarily on members of the Self-Assessment team, and convene the workgroups. County Boards of Supervisors will approve the County SIP and verify local coordination and integration before submitting the Plan to the State. The County SIP plans will be posted online and be made available for public comment. A CDSS review team will analyze and assess the County SIP and updates, and evaluate how the local CWS system operates. Following this review, the CDSS may make recommendations for improvements to the County SIP.



The CDSS and other state agency partners will be reviewing the SIP to ensure that all safety outcomes identified as an area needing improvement are addressed. Additionally, for all outcome indicators or systemic factors being targeted for improvement, CDSS will be looking for milestones and timeframes that tie back into the identified county strategy supporting the improvement goals. CDSS will be contacting counties throughout the SIP development process to obtain updates on progress and to confirm areas that are being highlighted in this first year. If possible, counties are encouraged to share drafts with CDSS to facilitate a quick plan approval.

In the event that the CDSS and the County fail to produce a consensus regarding the SIP or the degree of program or data improvements to be made, there will be a negotiation process between CDSS and the County. The CDSS has final authority to assign the contents of the plan and/or the degree of improvement required for successful completion of the plan.



The negotiation process that will be utilized when there is a lack of consensus about the SIP is still in development. However, it has been decided that representatives from CDSS, staff from the County being audited and representatives from CWDA will all be included

IV. County SIP Team Composition

As with other aspects of the C-CFSR, the goal is to open the process to relevant stakeholders. To reinforce the connection between the Self-Assessment and the SIP, members of the team drafting the SIP should come from the team that assisted with the Self-Assessment.

1. Core Representatives:

- CWS Administrators, Managers, and Social Workers
- Probation Administrators, Supervisors, and Officers
- California Youth Connection, if available
- Foster Parents
- CDSS Adoptions District Office or the Licensed County Adoption Agency providing adoption services to the County when the County does not provide adoption services.



Please note that the Core Representatives on the SIP team differs slightly from those required for the Self-Assessment Team. It is a *smaller* number of core members. The SIP does *not* include the Health Department, Mental Health, and a Local Education Agency. However, all of these members can be found in List 2, below.

2. Groups that must be consulted or represented:

- Court Appointed Special Advocates
- County Health Department
- County Mental Health Department
- County Alcohol and Drug Department
- Labor
- Law Enforcement
- Local representatives of children and parents
- Local Juvenile Court Bench Officer
- Local Education Agency
- Local Tribe(s) for applicable Counties
- Regional Training Academy

3. Other examples of groups that may be consulted or represented:

- County Children and Families Commission (Prop. 10 Commission)
- County Welfare Department
- Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Regional Center (depending on client population)
- Domestic Violence Prevention Provider

- Economic Development Agency
- Local Child Abuse Prevention Council
- Local Workforce Investment Board
- Local Public Housing Authority
- Other Service Providers
- Special Education Local Planning Area(s)

V. State Review Team for the County System Improvement Plan

State agencies that may be involved in reviewing and providing feedback on the County Self-Assessment and System Improvement Plan include:

- CDSS Children's Services Operations Bureau
- Office of Child Abuse Prevention
- Child and Youth Permanency Branch
- CDSS Estimates
- CDSS Community Care Licensing

General Instructions

1. This instruction packet contains the following:
 - Coversheet: contains the required information.
 - SIP Instructions: provides the core requirements for completing the SIP in a box and in *italics*.
 - Template: provides the matrix to be used in completing the SIP components.
2. Foster children supervised by the **County probation department** should be considered in each of the areas as applicable and distinct probation goals and strategies should be developed accordingly.



In contacting counties regarding the Self-Assessment, CDSS analysts have learned that confusion still exists regarding the role of probation and how to involve them in the process.

Why emphasize probation involvement?

Probation needs to be involved because Title IV-E funds are expended for children and youth involved with probation. There are two populations: children and youth who are dependent only under Welfare and Institutions 600-level code (probation only) and dual jurisdiction – dependent under both 300 and 600-level codes (child welfare and probation-dependent).

Where in the C-CFSR process should probation be involved?

Look for ways to involve probation in the following outcome indicators: rate of abuse/neglect in foster care, time to reunification, multiple placements, rate of foster care reentry, least restrictive setting, and the well-being outcome (number of children transitioning to self-sufficient adulthood with...).

In systemic factors you could include probation most easily in agency collaboration (a SIP template could be written for this factor with improving collaboration between child welfare and probation as the primary focus). Service array is another way to include probation as many of these children and youth may have difficulty accessing services such as mental health, education, substance abuse, job training, etc. These are suggestions only; you may include probation in any of the systemic factors that applies for your county.

3. In addition to the outcomes and systemic factors (and any items from the PQCR, if applicable) needing improvement, the County may address any additional areas for improvement at its option.
4. Counties will need to attach a list of individuals/groups that participated in the development of the SIP.
5. Counties will need to attach a copy of the agenda item or approved Board Action to the CDSS at the time of SIP submission.

SIP Cover Sheet

California's Child and Family Services Review System Improvement Plan	
County:	
Responsible County Child Welfare Agency:	
Period of Plan:	
Period of Outcomes Data:	(1) Quarter ending June 30, 2003
Date Submitted:	(2)
County Contact Person for County System Improvement Plan	
Name:	
Title:	
Address:	
Phone/Email	
Submitted by each agency for the children under its care	
Submitted by:	County Child Welfare Agency Director (Lead Agency)
Name:	
Signature:	
Submitted by:	County Chief Probation Officer
Name:	
Signature:	

SIP Instructions

Using the matrix format below, for each area identified in the County Self-Assessment or PQCR as needing improvement, describe the following:

- *County's current performance as identified in the County Self-Assessment.*
- *Improvement Goals: specific, achievable, measurable.*
- *The strategies to be used to achieve the goals*
- *How the strategies will build on progress and improve this program/outcome area.*
- *The specific milestones of the strategies, the timeframes in which the milestones will be achieved, and the responsible staff member for overseeing the milestone's accomplishment.*
- *Any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.*
- *The educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.*
- *The roles of other partners in achieving the improvement goals.*
- *Any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support accomplishment of the improvement goals.*

SIP Component Template

Outcome/Systemic Factor:					
County's Current Performance:					
Improvement Goal 1.0					
Strategy 1. 1				Strategy Rationale¹	
Milestone	1.1.1	Timeframe		Assigned to	
	1.1.2				
	1.1.3				
Strategy 1. 2				Strategy Rationale	
Milestone	1.2.1.	Timeframe		Assigned to	
	1.2.2				
	1.2.3				
Strategy 1. 3				Strategy Rationale	
Milestone	1.3.1	Timeframe		Assigned to	
	1.3.2				
	1.3.3				

¹ Describe how the strategy will build on progress and improve this program/outcome area.

Improvement Goal 2.0					
Strategy 2.1			Strategy Rationale		
Milestone	2.1.1	Timeframe		Assigned to	
	2.1.2				
	2.1.3				
Strategy 2. 2			Strategy Rationale		
Milestone	2.2.1	Timeframe		Assigned to	
	2.2.2				
	2.2.3				
Strategy 2.3			Strategy Rationale		
Milestone	2.3.1	Timeframe		Assigned to	
	2.3.2				
	2.3.3				

<u>Describe any additional systemic factors needing to be addressed that support the improvement plan goals.</u>					
Describe educational/training needs (including technical assistance) to achieve the improvement goals.					
Identify roles of the other partners in achieving the improvement goals.					
Identify any regulatory or statutory changes needed to support the accomplishment of the improvement goals.					

APPENDIX 1 - Glossary

Annual update	A Board of Supervisors-approved update of the SIP is due to CDSS by the anniversary of the acceptance of the original SIP by CDSS.
California Child and Family Services Review (C-CFSR)	California's version of the federal Child and Family Services Review that is used to assess county performance on child welfare outcome indicators. See AB 636.
Improvement goal	A program/process improvement that is linked to positive change in an outcome indicator or systemic factor OR a proposed numeric change (+/-) in an outcome indicator.
Local planning body	Local planning bodies are usually composed of local stakeholders and agencies that serve the families and children who are in the CWS system or who are at risk of entry to the system, along with consumers of CWS services and advocates. The SIP Team is an example of a local planning body. A local planning body is referenced in the SIP document is the same as the SIP Team.
Milestone	A measurable progress to achieving a goal. Milestones can be viewed as analogous to "activities" in a case-planning process but they should be stated in an action-completed manner ("Training for all staff completed." versus "All staff will be trained.")
Partners	Stakeholders in the child welfare system who work together to share responsibility and accountability for the safety and well-being of children and families within the community. Partners include faith-based organizations, county and community human services agencies, parents, youth, foster parents, the business and education communities, law enforcement and probation.
Peer Quality Case Reviews	A key component of the C-CFSR designed to enrich and deepen understanding of a county's actual practices in the field by bringing experienced peers from neighboring counties to assess and help shed light on the subject county's strengths and areas in need of improvement within the child welfare services delivery system and social work practice.
Performance Indicators	Specific, measurable data points used in combination to gauge progress in relation to established outcomes.
Probation involvement	Probation is a mandated member of the SIP Team as Title IV-E funds are used for probation-involved children and youth in placement. Some children are also dual jurisdiction (both W&I Code, Sections 300 and 602 dependents). Improvement goals, strategies and milestones that are targeted towards these populations should be identified as probation-related.
Regulatory or statutory changes	The SIP Template asks counties for regulatory or statutory changes needed to meet improvement goals. Examples may include changes in statute regarding family maintenance, changes in the definition of "family" or "relative", flexibility to expend certain funds, etc.
(Statewide) standards	Minimally acceptable performance on child welfare outcome indicators. At this time, only the federal government has established such benchmarks for the federal outcome indicators only.
SIP (System Improvement Plan)	A performance-based action plan created by a county child welfare agency in collaboration with its partners to drive positive change within the local county child welfare system resulting in outcome improvements for children and families.
	<p>A group of child welfare agency staff and partners who are involved in the creation and approval of the System Improvement Plan. Mandated members include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWS Administrators, Managers, and Social Workers • Probation Administrators, Supervisors, and Officers • California Youth Connection, if available • Foster Parents • CDSS Adoptions District Office or the Licensed County Adoption Agency providing adoption services to the County when the County does not provide adoption services.

Strategy	The plan(s) or technique(s) the CW agency will take to reach the identified improvement goal.
Strategy rationale	A brief explanation and justification of the selected strategy discussing how the strategy will build on progress and lead to improvements in the identified outcome indicator or systemic factor.
Systemic changes	These references those systemic factors that were revealed and explored in the analysis of the outcome indicators conducted during the Self-Assessment.
Systemic factor	<p>In addition to outcome indicators needing improvement, a SIP template can also be developed to address a particularly problematic systemic factor. Seven systemic factors are identified in the Self Assessment (management information system; case review (includes relationship to the court and family participation in case planning); recruitment, licensing and retention of foster and adoptive parents; training of staff and partners; quality assurance system; and agency collaboration).</p> <p>Any systemic factor that is repeatedly identified in conjunction with multiple outcome indicators likely deserves individual treatment in the SIP.</p>
Technical assistance and training	A limited amount of training and technical assistance will be offered to counties by CDSS and the Regional Training Academies in support of SIP-related activities. Requests for training and technical assistance should go to CDSS through your county's analyst.
Threshold	See statewide standards. In AB 636, CDSS is instructed to establish "compliance thresholds" for the outcome indicators. This will be done within the next few years.
Timeframe	The period of time by which a milestone will be accomplished. As the SIP is a 3-year plan that is updated annually, most timeframes will occur within 1 year. One month, 3, 6, 9 and 12 month timeframes are most practical.